Old French declension from a "Word and Paradigm" perspective and default syncretism

Alain Kihm (CNRS – Université Paris-Diderot)

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Inflectional paradigm of an OF masculine noun (M1 declension)

	singular	plural
NOM	*murs*	*mur*
OBL	*mur*	*murs*

Inflectional paradigm of a Romanian nonarticulated feminine noun

	singular	plural
DIR	*casă*	*case*
OBL	*case*	*case*

Number marking in Jemez (Kiowa-Tanoan; Mithun 1999:81)

☐ Class I: *ʔówa* 'woman', *ʔówash* 'women' (2 or >2).

☐ Class II: *dáábæ* 'chairs' (>2), *dáábæsh* 'chair' or '2 chairs'.

☐ Class III: *dééde* 'shirt' or 'shirts' (>2), *déédesh* '2 shirts'.

Contents

1. Syncretism and default

- ☐ **Syncretism**: identity of paradigm cells corresponding to distinct inflectional feature values.

- ☐ Semantically nonmotivated ("stipulated") syncretism: Romanian *(eu) tac* 'I am silent' vs. *(ele/ei) tac* 'they are silent'.

- ☐ Semantically motivated ("unstipulated") syncretism: Romanian *(ea/el) invită* 's/he invites' vs. *(ele/ei) invită* 'they invite'.

☐ **Default syncretism** : cell identity is a function of the default values of the features.

- « […] default interpretation of the speaker's utterance is normally understood to mean salient meaning intended by the speaker, or presumed by the addressee to have been intended, and recovered (a) without the help of inference from the speaker's intentions or (b) without conscious inferential process altogether. » (Jaszczolt 2010)

- « […] a default rule […] applies by default if no other rule applies » (Finkel & Stump 2002)

2. "Word and Paradigm"

- ☐ WP is founded on an **abstractive** view of morphological phenomena.
- ☐ As an inferential-realizational theory, PFM may share such a view.
- ☐ Paradigms are basic elements of the morphological component.
- ☐ Grammatical morphemes have no lexical reality: they are abstracted from the paradigmatically organized word-forms.

3. Old French declension

3.1. The masculine definite article

	singular	plural
NOM	li	li
OBL	le	les

3.2. The feminine definite article

singular	plural
la	les

(1) *La pucele aloit menant / li plus sages*
       the maid went leading   the more wise
       The wisest man was leading the maid

(2) *Bertran apele*
       Bertran calls
       He calls Bertrand

3.3. Feminine nouns ending in schwa (F1)

singular	plural
la porte	*les portes*

3.4. M1 declension

	singular	plural
NOM	*murs*	*mur*
OBL	*mur*	*murs*

- Masc. whose stem ends in /s/ or /ts/ (*z*), e.g. *bois* 'wood', *vis* 'face', *braz* 'arm', are invariable.

- Final schwas in M1 always follow consonant cluster or affricate: *pueble* 'people', *damage* /damádžə/ 'damage' ⟹ epenthetic.

3.4.1. Declension of Late Latin *murus*

	singular	plural
NOM	*murus*	*muri*
ACC	**muru*	*muros*

3.5. M2 declension

	singular	plural
NOM	*pere*	*pere*
OBL	*pere*	*peres*

3.6. Masculine variable stem ("imparisyllabic") declension (MVS)

	singular	plural
NOM	*ber(s)*	*baron*
OBL	*baron*	*barons*

3.7. F2 declension

	singular	plural
NOM	*flors*	*flors*
OBL	*flor*	*flors*

3.8. Feminine variable stem ("imparisyllabic") declension (FVS)

	singular	plural
NOM	*none*	*nonains*
OBL	*nonain*	*nonains*

4. Remarkable properties of the Old French declensions

☐ One exponent for 4 morphosyntactic feature sets.

☐ Marking reversal (Baerman 2007a) in M1:

☐ *Xs* = NOM in singular, OBL in plural.

☐ *X* = OBL in singular, NOM in plural.

- ☐ MVS and FVS: NOM.SG stem distinct.
- ☐ **Special stem**.
- ☐ F2: mix of M1 and F1: reversal as in M1 ($flors_{NOM.SG}$ = $flors_{OBL.PL}$), but -*s* generalized in the plural.
- ☐ FVS = F2, except that special stem functionally replaces -s.

- ☐ M2 membership fairly predictible: final schwa never follows consonant cluster or affricate.
- ☐ Synchronically not predictible:
a. whether C-final masc. belong to M1 or MVS
b. phonological relation between 2 stems in MVS and FVS.

☐ **Masc. declension** (M1, M2, MVS): (i) bare stem at NOM.PL, (ii) inflected form at NOM.SG (always in M1, often in M2 and MVS);

☐ **Fem. declension** (F2, FVS): (i) *-s* at both plural case forms, (ii) seldom *-s* at NOM.SG (frequent alignment of F2 on F1).

- ☐ Only masc. really fall in the purview of the declension system.

- ☐ Most fem. do not decline except when F2 fails to align on F1 or to generalize -*s* in the singular.

- ☐ FVS are few, usually brought back to the fold of one-stem fem., and they contrast case only in the singular.

5. Problems for constructivist approaches

☐ Constructivist assumption : *-s* is a morpheme, i.e. a lexical item nondistinct from *mur*, but for its bound character (and no deno-tation).

☐ Question: What does it mean?

☐ Two answers.

Homophony: 2 morphemes, s_1 NOM (cf. LL *muru**s***), s_2 PL (cf. LL *muro**s***)

☐ Question: Why not NOM.PL /mur-s_1-s_2/ realized **murses*?

☐ Never, even in Old Occitan where /e/ epenthesis is an option for making inflectional -*s* pronounceable following a root sibilant.

- What if s_1 and s_2 are portmanteaus meaning NOM.SG and OBL.PL?
- Better: voids the question of why not *murses*.
- Pushes under the rug the vexing puzzle of NOM.PL's bareness.
- Homophony account amounts to no more than a rewrite of the traditional diachronic account.

One -*s* with a "toggle" property

□ Morpheme, e.g. Jemez *-sh*, switches meaning depending on some inherent property of the stem it attaches to, e.g. inherent number according to noun class.

☐ No semantically based noun classes of the Jemez type in OF.

☐ Therefore no ground for assigning inherent numbers (or inherent cases) to OF nouns.

6. Defaults in OF declension

- ☐ Singular as default for Number (for count nouns) in two-valued systems.
- ☐ NOM.SG is morphologically marked by -*s* (phonology permitting) in M1, M2, and F2, by special stem in MVS and FVS.
- ☐ **OBL = default for case vs. NOM = nondefault.**

- **Typological evidence for NOM as nondefault in OF:**

- Ancient IE languages: counter-examples to generalization that NOM morphologically non-marked in non-ergative case systems.

- Owing to final *–m* deletion, NOM resulted more marked than ACC in LL (slide 17).

- ☐ **Syntactic evidence for OBL as default in OF:**

- ☐ OBL as a type is selected by more syntactic contexts than is NOM.

- ☐ OBL as tokens occurs more frequently in texts – and, assumedly, in discourse.

- **Diachronic evidence for NOM as nondefault in OF:**
- NOM forms disappear in Middle French but for a few exceptions: e.g. *fils* 'son', *Charles*, *pute* 'whore' (Nyrop 1965: 205-209).
- As a rule, default forms resist change better than do nondefaults.

- **Textual evidence for NOM as nondefault in OF:**

- As declension began to collapse at the beginning of the 13th century, OBL encroach-ments into NOM domains became frequent.

- Contrary "mistake" rare (Rheinfelder 1967: 35; Buridan 2000: 75-80).

- Generalizing default at the expense of nondefault is more natural a development than the opposite.

7. A default-syncretic account of the M1 declension

☐ Rule Block I (first approximation):

i. X_{NM1} σ {CASE *nom* NUM *sg*} $\rightarrow$ *Xs*

ii. X_{NM1} σ {CASE *obl* NUM *sg*} $\rightarrow$ *X*

iii. X_{NM1} σ {CASE *nom* NUM *pl*} $\rightarrow$ *X*

iv. X_{NM1} σ {CASE *obl* NUM *pl*} $\rightarrow$ *Xs*

☐ Paradigm function:

☐ PF: If L is a nominal lexeme having ⟨L, σ⟩ as a cell in its paradigm, PF (⟨L, σ⟩) = [I: **Stem** (⟨L, σ⟩)]

Rules of referral for M1 syncretisms (1st version):

☐ RR: L ∈ N, N ∈ M1 & (⟨L, σ {CASE *nom* NUM *sg*}⟩) = ⟨Y, σ⟩ ⊃ (⟨L, σ {CASE *obl* NUM *pl*}⟩) = ⟨Y, σ⟩.

☐ L ∈ N, N ∈ M1, & (⟨L, σ {CASE *obl* NUM *sg*}⟩) = ⟨Y, σ⟩, ⊃ (⟨L, σ {CASE *nom* NUM *pl*}⟩) = ⟨Y, σ⟩.

- In M1, the cell hosting the feature set {CASE *nom*, NUM *sg*} is syncretic with the cell hosting the feature set {CASE *obl*, NUM *pl*}.

- The cell hosting the feature set {CASE *obl*, NUM *sg*} is syncretic with the cell hosting the feature set {CASE *nom*, NUM *pl*}.

- Assume singular to plural directionality.

- ☐ What kind of syncretism?
- ☐ NOM.SG / OBL.PL and OBL.SG / NOM.PL do not seem to form natural semantic classes
- ☐ Arbitrary syncretism?
- ☐ They do form natural classes: terms are mirror images of each other in terms of default.
- ☐ **Defaults anchor the relationship**.

- ☐ Pertinent features and defaults are given in the grammar's signature (Sag 2007)
- ☐ Feature Specification Defaults:

- ☐ FSD1: CASE *obl*
- ☐ FSD2: NUM *sg*

☐ Rule Block I (final version):

i. X_{NM1} σ { } → X

ii. X_{NM1} σ {CASE *nom* NUM *pl*} → X

iii. X_{NM1} σ {CASE *nom*} → Xs

iv. X_{NM1} σ {NUM *pl*} → Xs

- ☐ Forms showing case-number features with harmonious default values, all default (i) or all nondefault (ii), are syncretic.
- ☐ Inharmonious forms showing one default and one nondefault (iii-iv) are syncretic.
- ☐ **M1 syncretism is default syncretism**.

Rules of referral for M1 syncretisms (final version)

- ☐ RR: L $\in$ N, N $\in$ M1 & ($\langle$L, σ {CASE *nom*}$\rangle$) = $\langle$Y, σ$\rangle$ $\supset$ ($\langle$L, σ {NUM *pl*}$\rangle$) = $\langle$Y, σ$\rangle$.

- ☐ RR: L $\in$ N, N $\in$ M1 & ($\langle$L, σ { }$\rangle$) = $\langle$Y, σ$\rangle$ $\supset$ ($\langle$L, σ {CASE *nom* NUM *pl*}$\rangle$) = $\langle$Y, σ$\rangle$.

8. Why are the syncretisms as they are?

☐ Assumption: M1 pattern is a consequence of the gram-matical challenge OF was facing: preserve a twofold Case-Number distinction, i.e. four-cell paradigms, having kept only one exponent.

	Singular	Plural
C1	X	Xa
C2	X	Xa

Table 7

	Singular	Plural
C1	X	X
C2	Xa	Xa

Table 8

	Singular	Plural
C1	X	Xa
C2	Xa	Xa

Table 9

	Singular	Plural
C1	Xa	Xa
C2	X	Xa

Table 10

	Singular	Plural
C1	X	X
C2	X	Xa

Table 11

	Singular	Plural
C1	X	Xa
C2	Xa	X

Table 12

	Singular	Plural
C1	Xa	X
C2	X	Xa

Table 13

- T7: Number contrast, no Case contrast: OF F1 (sl. 14), modern Romance languages but Romanian.
- T8: Case contrast, no Number contrast (?).
- T9: Case contrast in sg., Number contrast at base form, not at inflected form; no Case contrast in pl.: Romanian fem. declension (sl. 3).
- T(10), T(11): F2 (sl. 20), M2 (sl. 18).

- T12 or T13 as possible best solutions.
- T12 not optimal in terms of default-to-marking relations.
- T13 ensures a less opaque relation: non-default Case and Number are marked.

- ☐ Cost:

- ☐ Case not distinguished when Number is different (***NOM***.SG = ***OBL***.PL).

- ☐ Number not distinguished when Case is different (OBL.***SG*** = NOM.***PL***).

- ☐ **Maximally nondefault NOM.PL is morphologically non-marked.**

- ☐ T13's advantage: maximally default OBL.SG has the base form for an exponent.

- ☐ Partially nondefault NOM.SG and OBL.PL are marked.

- ☐ One deviation from expected default-to-marking relations, but a serious one.

- ☐ Present analysis shows that things could not be different given input conditions.
- ☐ It is an explanation.
- ☐ Question whether *-s* marks case or number does not make sense in WP: *-s* in the word-form realizes case **and** number contrast according to the only possible pattern given the exponent's loneness.

9. Conclusion I: rich vs. minimal vs. depleted declension

- ☐ Rich declension : nominals inflect for case and number (Latin).

- ☐ Minimal declension: number only (modern Romance languages except Romanian – Spoken Modern French: nominals do not inflect).

- ☐ Rich declension despite small paradigms if ratio exponents to cell number not too low.

	singular	plural
common	*cat*	*cait*
genitive	*chait*	*gcat*
vocative	*chait*	*chata*

Table 15: Modern Irish declension of masc. nouns ending in a broad C

- OF declensions neither minimal nor rich: **depleted**.
- Stage in change from rich towards minimal (or null) system.

- ☐ Default syncretism: correlate of more than binary contrasts despite near-total loss of inflectional exponents.

- ☐ Complex; cognitive plausibility needs more demonstration.

- ☐ Depleted declension unstable and (apparently) rare and transitory.

Conclusion II

☐ The "Word and Paradigm" abstractive approach is es-pecially adequate to detect default syncretism and to recognize its meaning and significance.

Thank you for your attention.